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SUBJECT: U.S. NAVAL MEDICAL RESEARCH CENTER DRAWS FURTHER
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REF: JAKARTA 740 (AND PREVIOUS)

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1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Health Minister Siti Fadilah Supari paid a



surprise visit to the U.S. Naval Medical Research Unit in Jakarta (NAMRU-2) on Friday, April 18. Although the visit went without serious incident, Supari escalated her criticism of NAMRU in subsequent media interviews. Several legislators joined in the criticism and called for the lab's closure. FM Wirajuda questioned granting diplomatic immunity to NAMRU personnel. Mission will report septel the implications of this increasing criticism for the future of NAMRU's operations. END SUMMARY.

SURPRISE VISITOR

2. (SBU) Health Minister Siti Fadilah Supari made an unscheduled visit to NAMRU on Friday, April 18, with a TV crew and print reporters in tow. She said her visit was to confirm that NAMRU was no longer conducting studies that involved the transfer of biological specimens. (Note: The Ministry of Health on March 31 wrote to NAMRU ordering it to halt all studies/surveillance which included the transfer of biological specimens until the U.S. and Indonesian Governments agreed on a new MOU governing NAMRU's operations. Reftels.)

3. (SBU) After a brief delay--caused by Supari's unexpected arrival--she was escorted through the facility by two American staff. She asked several of NAMRU's local staff whether NAMRU was still receiving biological samples. All said that the facility had not received any samples since the Ministry had ordered Indonesian institutions to cease sharing samples with the lab.

HER SIDE OF THE STORY

4. (SBU) Heightened criticism of NAMRU came in the wake of Supari's visit. In an interview published in the April 21 edition of the Indonesian-language daily Koran Tempo, she criticized NAMRU for allegedly making her wait ten minutes before allowing her entry. This was inappropriate, she charged, because the facility was on Ministry of Health land. She also questioned the appropriateness of having the facility run by the U.S. military. The TV crew that accompanied Supari subsequently produced a negative report on NAMRU's operations, which ran on a major national TV network.

5. (SBU) Supari added more criticisms the following day. She said the lab's operations must be more transparent and noted "I have no idea what NAMRU does." Further, NAMRU had never reported the results of its research to the Indonesian Government, the minister asserted. Finally, Supari argued that as malaria and dengue fever still affected Indonesia, NAMRU had not provided any concrete benefits to the Indonesian people. That said, Supari held out the possibility that the GOI and USG could reach agreement on a new MOU as long as it was mutually beneficial to both countries.



OTHER CRITICS PILE ON

6. (SBU) Several members of the legislature (DPR) joined the fray. Dr. Ribka Tjiptaning, Chair of the DPR's Commission IX responsible for health matters, called for NAMRU to be shut down. Speaking to reporters, she attacked presidential advisor Dino Djalal for saying that the Indonesian Government still sought to reach agreement on a new MOU governing NAMRU's operations. Indonesia did not need American assistance with health research, Tjiptaning claimed.

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7. (SBU) Other legislators made more sinister charges. Soeripto (one name only), Deputy Chair of DPR Commission III (law and human rights), claimed that NAMRU was a front for intelligence activities and also called for its closure. Yuddi Chrisnandi, a member of Commission I (foreign affairs, defense and intelligence) charged that the Indonesian Military (TNI) did not have sufficient control over NAMRU's operations. TNI spokesman Colonel Ahmad Yani told the Indo Pos newspaper that NAMRU's operations were in the domain of the Ministry of Health.

FM WEIGHS IN

8. (SBU) Speaking to reporters on April 21, FM Wirajuda discounted the most sensational allegations and said he had no knowledge of NAMRU's involvement in intelligence activities. However, he reportedly cast doubt on the need for NAMRU personnel to have diplomatic immunity. Wirajuda argued, that "they constitute a research unit, not a diplomatic mission. Therefore, we believe there is no need for immunity," according to press reports. The FM echoed Supari's call for greater transparency. He also said Indonesia was still open to negotiating a new MOU on NAMRU but noted that the USG had not yet responded to the draft text that the GOI had submitted for USG review in November, 2007.

HUME

